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ABSTRACT

The paper describes the business/industry internship for school counselors, special educators, and vocational educators at Central Connecticut State University, New Britain, Connecticut. The purpose of this internship was to provide school counselors with experiences in local businesses and industries that would enable them to update their information about the world of work in order to provide more up-to-date and realistic career counseling and to make contacts for facilitating a student's transition from school to work. Selected counselors interned at sites employing individuals with disabilities. This was done in order to improve their ability to provide vocational counseling, recommend appropriate vocational programming, and increase the job placement and retention rate of individuals with disabilities. The internship, which also included an academic component, classes conducted prior to and during the internship, and an in-school project, has provided interns with information on opportunities available in industry, modifications that have been made for those who are disabled, and job seeking and retention skills which should be emphasized in both counseling and vocational programs. During 1986, the internship will be expanded to include special educators and vocational educators. (Author/CL)

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BUSINESS/INDUSTRY INTERNSHIP FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS, SPECIAL EDUCATORS AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATORS

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ABSTRACT

Business/Industry Internship for School Counselors, Special Educators and Vocational Educators.

This document contains a description of the business/industry internship for school counselors, special educators and vocational educators at Central Connecticut State University, New Britain, Connecticut. This internship is a component of a project, funded by the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. The purpose of the project is to provide preservice training to school counselors, special educators and vocational educators that will enable individuals from these areas to work cooperatively in the vocational assessment, preparation and job placement of students with special needs.

In an attempt to provide a better school-to-work transition for students with special needs, a business/industry internship was developed and implemented on a pilot basis. The purpose of this internship was to provide school counselors with experiences in local businesses and industries that would enable them to update their information about the world of work in order to provide more up-to-date and realistic career counseling and to make contacts that would assist them in facilitating a student's transition from school to work. Selected counselors interned at sites employing individuals with disabilities. This was done in order to improve their ability to provide vocational counseling, recommend appropriate vocational programming, and increase the job placement and retention rate of individuals with disabilities.

The internship, which also included an academic component - classes conducted prior to and during the internship, and an in-school project has provided interns with information on opportunities available in industry, modifications that have been made for those who are disabled, and job seeking and retention skills which should be emphasized in both counseling and vocational programs. During 1986, the internship will be expanded to include special educators and vocational educators.

BUSINESS/INDUSTRY INTERNSHIP FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS, SPECIAL EDUCATORS AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATORS

The vocational preparation of students with special needs in the junior and senior high school should include career guidance from counselors, special educators and vocational educators. This guidance should, among other factors, be based upon current information regarding opportunities available, preparation required, expected work behaviors, and modifications that have been made and that could be made to jobs and the work environment to accommodate specific disabilities. One factor hindering the delivery of up-to-date information in these areas is the lack of current, first hand contact with the world of work by many of those who should be providing career information to youth with special needs.

Vocational educators in the trade areas are generally required to have had on-the-job experience in their trade area as one of their qualifications for teacher certification. All too often, however, this experience is narrow in that it is related primarily to the instructor's area of expertise. In addition, for many of these instructors, this experience is not recent experience. Individuals teaching industrial arts, business education, consumer home economics, marketing, distributive education, and many other vocational areas are normally not required to have on-the-job experience as part of their teaching certification requirements. Generally, many of these individuals tend to acquire limited on-the-job experience related to their vocational area either through working their way through college or through summer employment. School counselors and special educators, more often than not, have little if any, "real world" work experience to be able to call upon in providing career guidance or career preparation. One then must ask how can these individuals promote their students' understanding of occupations, career development and requirements of the work place when their experience in this area is non-existent, limited, or out-of-date? With the unemployment rate for handicapped persons being in the area of 50 percent to 75 percent (Wehman and Barcus, 1985) practical career guidance and preparation is a necessity, not an option.

One program which attempts to reduce this knowledge/experience gap is the Business/Industry Internship Program at Central Connecticut State University. Initiated in 1979, as a summer work internship for school counselors, the program was expanded in 1985 to include settings employing individuals with disabilities. In 1986, this internship program will be further expanded to include special educators and vocational educators. The goal of this program is to provide interns with insight into the world of work through on-the-job experience in business and industrial settings. The internship experience is designed to:

1. Increase each intern's knowledge of a selected business or industry,

2. Reduce stereotyping of "blue collar" worker's work situation and their life style,

3. Provide each participant with the opportunity to experience themselves and others as persons in the work environment and,

4. Provide the opportunity to work and socialize with individuals in various positions in a selected business or industry.

In addition to the four objectives established for those interns assigned to "traditional sites", additional objectives were developed for those interns assigned to "non-traditional sites". It was established that; by the conclusion of the internship experience, those interns assigned to sites employing individuals with disabilities should be able to:

1. Describe a variety of jobs which are adaptable to individuals with disabilities.

2. Describe how to adapt jobs to various disabilities.

3. State appropriate vocational goals in individualized educational plans.

4. Increase the rate of job placement and retention for students with disabilities.

5. Increase the number of job placements directly related to the vocational training undertaken by students with disabilities.

6. Recommend modifications in vocational programs so that the training provided to students with disabilities will enhance their employment prospects.

7. Develop lists of expected work behaviors for their respective business/industrial sites.

8. Demonstrate, to students with disabilities, skills in the areas of: assertiveness, job survival, interpersonal relations, and communications.

9. Demonstrate self advocacy skills which can be taught to students with disablities.

In addition to these objectives, each intern was required to establish his own personal objectives for the internship. Some of the objectives developed by the interns were:

1. To develop a presentation for the company to be given by a company representative to high school students in order to provide them with information about the industry that the company is involved in, careers in the industry, and what the requirements are for employment in the industry.

2. Prepare a list of career/job opportunities available in the company.

3. To develop a brochure on the company for use in the secondary school as an informational/recruitment tool for potential employees.

Selection Criteria

The following criteria was used for the selection of participants:

1. Practicing school counselors who had not participated in such a program previously.
2. School counselors with little or no work experience in their background.
3. Secondary school counselors with placement responsibilities.
4. Career educators with high school responsibilities.

When it was decided to include settings employing individuals with disabilities, the following additional criteria were added for those interns in such settings:

1. Secondary school counselors whose primary responsibility is working with students with special needs.
2. Secondary school counselors who have some responsibility in working with students with special needs.
3. Secondary school counselors who are interested in working with students with special needs.

Work Experience Component

Internship placements were diverse. Examples include, companies involved in aerospace, insurance, retail sales, tool and equipment manufacturing, fast foods, banking, health care and leisure activities. Contingent upon the needs of the intern and the commitment of the business, interns either remain at their site full-time for three weeks or half-time for six weeks. During this time, the interns, generally assigned to one department in the company, observe the operation of the department as it relates to the company as a whole; note the incorporation of different management techniques, such as quality circles; perform work required in their department and interview workers about the specific requirements, educational and otherwise, for their jobs. In addition to the above, the interns assigned to sites employing individuals with disabilities observe the types of jobs performed by these individuals, note modifications, if any, that have been made in the work environment which enhance an individual's ability to perform the job, and take note of the variety of jobs available in the company. All of these activities are designed to provide the interns with information which they can use in their career conseling activities and share with their colleagues in counseling and teaching.

One intern noted that the observations and interviews enabled him to see how all the basic academic skills emphasized in the schools came together to enable a person to function in the workplace. For another, the internship allowed her to observe first-hand practical applications of trigonometry, and provided her with examples that she could use when counseling students with regard to including trignometry in their program of studies. For others, these experiences enabled them to find

out first hand that the grass was not really greener in the business world and allowed them to take a fresh look at their present careers. Finally, the majority of the interns indicated that the internship, with its on the job activities, opened their eyes to the business community regarding the diverse career opportunities available within a given company, the areas in need of qualified employees, the knowledge about and positive attitude of management toward individuals with disabilities and the variety of jobs which could easily be adapted to various disabilities.

One of the objectives for the interns at the sites employing individuals with disabilities was the development of a list of expected work behaviors for their internship site. The behaviors typically identified were: following directions, completing a task, attendance, punctuality, attention to the task, completing a job in a given time period, knowing what is expected if a job is to be done well, getting along with others, taking constructive criticism, independence, self motivation, good hygiene and appearance. Upon identifying these behaviors, many of the interns noted the similarity between these behaviors and those expected of students in their respective schools. For one intern who felt that many of the rules established for student behavior at her school were not very relevant, the development of this list of expected work behaviors allowed her to see the correlation between her school's rules and those of the workplace.

Academic Component

In addition to the work experience component, the internship also involved an academic component. This component included University classes before, during, and after the internship experience. In the pre-internship sessions, interns are made aware of the goals and requirements of the internship. A discussion with the interns who were selected to be assigned to "non-traditional" sites determined that some basic information on disabilities should be presented to the counselors who would be interning in these sites. To fulfill this need, two-three hour sessions in which myths related to retardation, learning disabilities, orthopedic impairments, hearing and sight impairments, emotional problems, and other health impairments were utilized to provide basic information about these disabilities. In addition, simulation activities regarding these disabilities were also conducted.

In order to provide interns with the knowledge to analyze a job. In order to ascertain the skills required to perform it, and how it could be modified to accommodate given exceptionalities, the interns also participated in a presentation on task analysis and its application to job modification. Comments by interns indicated that these sessions enabled them to become aware of different disabilities and to identify with the problems that a disability imposes on an individual. The internship experience also provided interns with a better outlook regarding the abilities of disabled individuals and assisted them in being able to task analyize the jobs that they observed.

Class sessions, which addressed the topics of assertiveness and focused on strategies to promote the development of skills in the areas of job seeking and job survival, interpersonal relations, communication

and self-advocacy in students with disabilities were also conducted. These areas were included because individuals with disabilities generally need more specialized knowledge in these areas to assist them in overcoming employer discrimination and lack of job opportunities which they may encounter (TERC 1978). Because of their disabilities, these students typically have fewer opportunities than their non-disabled peers to develop essential job seeking and retention skills through part-time after school and summer jobs.

The academic component also involved readings in seven different books. These readings were assigned approximately two months prior to the internship experience. Neff's book on Work and Human Behavior served as the major text for the internship program. Pascal's The Art of Japanese Management: Applications For American Executives, and Theory Z: How American Business Can Meet The Japanese Challenge by Ouchi provided the interns with background information on the humanization of management and on Japaneese management techniques. These readings provided the interns with informaton that enabled them to look for the Japaneese influence in the management of the company. Working, by Studds Terkel enabled the students to develop their interviewing technique to gather information about various jobs observed. Reading Megatrends and The Third Wave enabled the interns to query the future direction of the company in terms of Naisbett's and Toffler's predictions. Finally, a book titled Guidance and Support Services for the High School Students with Physical Disabilities provided the interns with insights into many disabilities and suggested techniques for providing counseling and support services for individuals with disabilities. The reading material was referred to by students in the class discussions about their internships and later in their final reports. These readings were selected for their ability to provide individuals with insights into the world of work and a knowledge base from which to examine the world of work and its many careers. Input from the interns indicated that these readings were helpful in achieving the objectives for which they were selected.

In one of the class sessions, interns discussed the use of tests in industry for the purposes of hiring, placement, and advancement and were administered The Myers-Briggs inventory. The results of this inventory were discussed in terms of how the results of such an inventory could play an important part in an individual's placement in various positions in a company.

During the internship, the interns met as a group to discuss their experiences and to ascertain the progress being made toward previously established objectives. These sessions enabled the interns to discuss the similarities and differences in "their" companies. Interns also provided each other with encouragement and suggestions in areas of concern. These seminar sessions provided a valuable vehicle for the integration of the academic component and the internship experiences.

The Back to School Project

Upon returning to their schools in the fall, interns were required to incorporate information from their internship and class sessions into their jobs as counselors. Approximately three months were provided after the start of school to allow the interns the time necessary to incorporate newly acquired information and skills into

their jobs. One requirement of each student's final internship report is a section on what the intern has done differently in his or her position as a counselor because of the internship experience.

The following are samples of some of the activities that the interns have accomplished:

1. Provided more accurate and up-to-date information on jobs.

2. Became involved with the cooperative work experience program for students with special needs.

3. Conducted a study of local businesses to ascertain what accommodations have been made for individuals with disabilities.

4. Worked with vocational instructors who are teaching students with special needs and made them aware of the variety of jobs available at the internship site and the requirements for these jobs.

5. Encouraged mathematics and vocational instructors to team teach, enabling students to experience practical applications of mathematics.

6. Became an advocate for fairness and now view the abilities rather than the disabilities of individuals.

7. Worked with special educators to prepare their students for the world of work.

8. Utilized graduates of the school who were employed to speak to students about their jobs and the skills required for them.

9. Helped students with disabilities develop self-assertiveness, job seeking, and job survival skills.

10. Recommended modifications in existing vocational programs that enhance the employment prospects of students with disabilities.

11. Wrote more realistic vocational goals on individualized education plans.

Evaluation

At the start of the internship, the interns assigned to sites employing individuals with disabilities were administered a pre-internship assessment in which each intern rated himself on each of the nine objectives (developed into competencies) established for these internships. At the conclusion of the internship the interns again rated themselves on these competencies. In all cases, increases in proficiency were noted. The intern's supervisor rated each intern in terms of his/her growth with respect to the internship objectives. This evaluation is currently in progress. Finally the interns were asked to evaluate the internship experience and make recommendations for future programs. Some of the recommendations were:

1. More sites employing workers with disabilities should be made available.

2. More interns should be placed in sites employing individuals with disabilities.

3. More active interaction with workers having disabilities should be required.

4. Interns should visit an operational vocational assessment center to observe the assessment process.

5. Interns should work with a number of individuals with disabilities rather than one or two of these individuals.

6. Expand the internship to include special educators and vocational educators.

In conclusion, the internship involving sites employing individuals with disabilities has been judged by its participants to have been a success and should be expanded. According to the participants, the internship provided counselors with more self-confidence in discussing careers in the world of work, a realistic picture of the world of business and industry, a better understanding of the employment prospects for individuals with disabilities and with skills and up-to-date information that they can apply to the vocational preparation of students with special needs.

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